GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2402
ANSWERED ON:07.08.2000
GANGA ACTION PLAN
A. VENKATESH NAIK;ASHOK NAMDEORAO MOHOL

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether despite expenditure of huge amount on Ganga Action Plan, the water of the river has not shown any improvement;

(b) if so, the details and the reasons therefor;

(c) whether any short comings have been noticed by the Government in the implementation and operation of the programme;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the steps being taken by the Government in this direction?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT & FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI)

(a)&(b) The Ganga Action Plan Phase I has been under implementation since 1985.The scheme has been closed on 31.3.2000. An expenditure of about Rs. 452 crore has been incurred on the programme. With the completion of works taken up under the first Phase , it has been possible to minimise the organic pollution reaching the Ganga river wherever the works have been made operational. However, there has been only an incidental reduction in the level of microbial pollution in the treated sewage reaching the river. This is due to the fact that technologies for reducing microbial pollution are either cost intensive or need large areas of land. Moreover, under the Ganga Action Plan Phase I only about 35% of the pollution load presently being generated from all the towns along the river has been tackled. The remaining pollution load is to be tackled under the Ganga Action Plan Phase-II which is already under implementation. As a result the impact of the first phase works of the Ganga Action Plan on river water quality is not adequately visible.

(c) & (d) The major shortcomings of the Ganga Action Plan is in respect of the operation and maintenance ofassets created. The concerned State Governments particularly the Government of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have not been able to provide adequate and timely funds for operating the plants. Nor these States have been able to ensure continuous supply of electricity for running the assets. However, operation and maintenance of assets is generally satisfactory in West Bengal. Another shortcoming relating to the implementation of the programme is the total time of nearly 15 years taken in the completion of the Ganga Action Plan Phase I.This was mainly due to delay in land acquisition, litigations and contractual disputes.

(e) The steps taken by the Government for the implementation of Ganga Action Plan Phase II are:

i. State Governments have been asked to take advance action for land acquisition wherever applicable after which only the related schemes be approved. Release of central grants and its utilisation by the State Governments is monitored more vigorously to minimise instances of diversion of funds.
ii. Release of Central grants under the second phase of Ganga Action Plan to Bihar was withheld for some time till a firm commitment from the State Government was available for providing adequate funds for operation and maintenance of the assets. The matter is also being pursued with the State Government of U.P. for adequate provision of funds for operation and maintenance of assets.
iii. The State Governments have been asked to ensure continuous supply of electricity for assets through dedicated feeders wherever required.
iv. To address the problem of microbial pollution, it has been decided to adopt land based technologies for sewage treatment wherever feasible and to utilise the treated wastewater for irrigation purposes.